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UNHCR ACTIVITIES FINANCED BY VOLUNTARY FUNDS: REPORT FOR 1993-1994 PROPOSED PROGRAMMES AND BUDGET FOR 1995

PART IV. THE AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN

Section 5 - Mexico

(submitted by the High Commissioner)

GE.94-03138

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

MEXICO

Gulf of Mexico
Merida
Cancun
State of Yucatan
Campeche
State of Quintana Roo
Quetzal-Edzna
Les Laureles
Kuchumatan
La Laguna
Keste
Maya Tecun
Maya Balam
Los Lirios
MEXICO
Chetumal
State of Tabasco
State of Campeche
Palenque
State of Chiapas
BELIZE
Caribbean Sea
Comitán
GUATEMALA
The boundaries shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations
HONDURAS
0
200
Km.
City
Refugee settlement
Area of refugee camps
UNHCR Office

IV.5 MEXICO

Country Overview

Characteristics of the refugee population

1. At 31 December 1993, Mexico hosted a refugee population of approximately 52,000, almost all of whom are assisted by UNHCR. Most of these are Guatemalans, although there are some Salvadorians and persons of other nationalities living in urban areas. The breakdown is as follows:

Country of origin	Number 1/1/93	Number 31/12/93	Percent M	F	C	Location	Type of assistance
Guatemala	27,969	26,293	19	18	63	Chiapas	CM/LS/RP
Guatemala	11,502	11,532	25	23	53	Campeche	CM/LS/RP
Guatemala	7,883	6,468	19	18	68	Quintana Roo	CM/LS/RP
Guatemala	2,492	2,542	66	34	n/a	Mexico City	CM/RP
El Salvador	4,157	4,009	67	32	n/a	Mexico City	CM/RP
Other	1,148	1,108	72	28	n/a	Mexico City	CM/RP

Note: In this table, children are considered those aged 0-13 years.
Of the Guatemalan refugee children living in Chiapas, Campeche and Quintana Roo, 43 per cent were born in Mexico.

2. A large number of externally displaced persons and unrecognized refugees who are not being assisted by UNHCR continue to live in Mexico. In 1989, the International Conference on Central American Refugees (CIREFCA) estimated that there were some 340,000 such persons on Mexican territory.

Major developments (1993 and first quarter 1994)

3. The movements of Guatemalan refugees within and out of the camps had to be restricted as a result of the violence which broke out in January 1994 in Chiapas, an area where over 70 refugee camps are located. The consequent reduction in work opportunities affected refugee incomes. Later in the year Mexican peasants occupied several plots of land belonging to private owners, including some plots which belonged to the Catholic Church, which affected Guatemalan refugees living there. Nevertheless, the permanent presence of the Mexican Commission for Assistance to Refugees (COMAR) and UNHCR helped ensure that no incidents took place.

Programme objectives and priorities

4. The UNHCR Regional Office in Mexico has established the following country programme objectives for 1994 and 1995.

Guatemalan refugees

5. The primary objective will be to continue to repatriate those who opt for voluntary repatriation and to find adequate and suitable durable solutions for those who decide to remain in Mexico. Achievements made towards ensuring the self-sufficiency of Guatemalan refugees in Campeche and Quintano Roo during the multi-year projects of 1989-1992 will be further consolidated. Negotiations will also continue with the Government to promote the transfer of responsibility for refugee settlements to federal and state authorities. The Mexican authorities considered that such a transfer could take place once a significant number of refugees had repatriated; given that this has now occurred, this transfer is planned to take place as soon as possible.

Urban refugees

6. Assistance will continue to be given to urban refugees, almost all in Mexico City, in the field of education, vocational training and counselling. Programmes will facilitate individual repatriation for those wishing to return to their country of origin. Basic assistance will also be provided to new arrivals to facilitate their integration and subsequent independence. These activities are expected to continue beyond 1995.

Support to COMAR

7. Negotiations initiated in September 1993 regarding the phased reduction of UNHCR's financial support to the administrative and operational costs of COMAR will begin to bear fruit in July 1994, leading to an eventual total phase-out of UNHCR's contributions to the agency's administrative costs.

Programme delivery and administrative support costs

8. If the rate of repatriation is achieved as planned, a reduction in the workload will result in a corresponding decrease in staff, particularly in 1995, and the UNHCR staffing levels will be kept under review.

Arrangements for implementation/related inputs

9. COMAR is UNHCR's main implementing partner in the three southern states, coordinating its activities with the relevant government institutions at both federal and state levels. The Instituto Mexicano de Seguro Social undertakes activities in the health sector in Chiapas and Campeche, and the Secretaría Estatal de Salud does so in Quintana Roo. The Secretaría de Educación Pública is in charge of pre-school and primary education levels in the three states mentioned above. In line with the expected phased transfer of responsibilities to government institutions, their involvement in programme activities is expected to increase, particularly in Chiapas. The non-governmental organizations (NGOs) Centro de Investigaciones y Apoyo a la Mujer (CIAM) and Promoción de Servicios

Comunitarios, A.C. (PROSECO) are UNHCR's main implementing partners in Chiapas for income-generation, health and training activities for Guatemalan refugees.

10. Assistance to urban refugees in 1993 was administered by the Mexican NGO Servicios de Representación Profesional y Técnica (SERTEC). In 1994 a new implementing partner in the Centro Mexicano de Ayuda a Refugiados, A.C. (CEMAR) replaced SERTEC in ensuring the delivery of basic assistance to urban refugees, while legal assistance is handled directly by UNHCR.

11. Some 5,370 metric tons of basic food supplies are planned to be mobilized in 1994 through the World Food Programme (WFP), including a portion of the reintegration food assistance for those repatriating to Guatemala from the three southern states. Smaller quantities will be required in 1995 as refugee populations decrease in the wake of repatriations. UNHCR will purchase supplementary food items locally for the therapeutic feeding programme in Chiapas.

General Programmes

(a) Variations in planned activities in 1993

12. The overall refugee population decreased by 6 per cent in 1993 due to repatriation of both urban refugees and those in camps and settlements in the three southern states. In addition to the planned voluntary repatriation of 256 urban refugees during 1993, the Regional Office is aware of 78 spontaneous departures. Considerable delays in completing and upgrading basic infrastructure were experienced with COMAR in 1993. Progress was also slow in transferring responsibility over, for example, water and electricity management, to appropriate national institutions due to difficulties in bringing installations up to the standard required by these institutions. It is hoped that further discussions with the Government will correct the slow progress made so far.

13. Although issuance of the new national migratory status forms, the Fórmula Migratoria para Refugiados (FMR), was completed in Quintana Roo and initiated in Campeche and Chiapas, refugees' freedom of movement within the country and right to work, prerequisites for self-sufficiency, are still not guaranteed. FMRs will continue to be issued in Campeche until the end of 1994.

(b) 1994 planned implementation

14. UNHCR will directly implement the project for the voluntary repatriation of some 250 urban refugees covering documentation and travel arrangements.

15. UNHCR has continued to encourage COMAR to make greater efforts to complete in 1994 the roads, water and electricity works started in 1992. In order to achieve the successful integration of refugees in Campeche and Quintana Roo, outstanding work on roads, water and electricity is expected to be completed in 1994. Water and electricity systems should meet the standards required by the national authorities by the beginning of 1995, when transfer of responsibilities to them and refugee communities is expected to take place, as originally foreseen for 1992.

16. Care and maintenance assistance in Chiapas will continue to meet the basic needs of refugees awaiting repatriation or alternative durable solutions.

17. UNHCR will work closely with the new implementing partner, CEMAR, to ensure that appropriate and adequate treatment and assistance are given to urban refugees. This will include UNHCR's participation, at least in the early stages, in the assessment of applicants for educational assistance. The agency will be encouraged to make maximum possible use of national services and structures, in particular in the areas of education, employment and training, to ensure the most beneficial use of limited resources. An inventory of available national services is being compiled, following which it will be possible to identify the most appropriate services to assist refugees.

(c) **1995 programme proposals**

Care and maintenance

18. Pending durable solutions, the basic care and maintenance assistance programme will continue in Chiapas in 1995 to assist both those awaiting repatriation and those who opt to remain in Mexico and who have not yet reached self-sufficiency. Given the position of the Mexican Government on the legal status of refugees, their integration in Mexico, the current political situation and the land tenure system in Chiapas, it is expected that negotiations will be both delicate and protracted. Assistance provided will be similar to 1994.

19. In the case of rural beneficiaries in Chiapas, Campeche and Quintana Roo, complementary and therapeutic food will be provided for needy beneficiaries; food provided by WFP will be transported to specific sites for distribution to refugees; domestic items will be provided on the basis of individual or family necessity; pre-school, primary and secondary school and literacy training activities will continue, with the emphasis on encouraging the Ministry of Education, through COMAR, to take responsibility for these activities and to integrate refugee children into Mexican schools; water and sanitation infrastructure will be provided for specific sites in emergencies; basic sanitation and health items will be provided and complemented where necessary by Mexican health institutions; small-scale road and bridge repairs will ensure food delivery and access to isolated communities that have been cut off during the rainy season; legal assistance will be provided in exceptional cases; and the issuance of FMRs will be facilitated for dispersed refugees who were unable to obtain one in 1994.

20. Urban refugees will continue to receive basic subsistence support as they have not been legally recognized as refugees in Mexico and are thus unable to undertake professional activities to support themselves. The nature of assistance provided will consist of a rental and subsistence allowance, temporary accommodation, medical treatment, cultural activities, pre-school, primary and secondary education, vocational skills training, and assistance in obtaining identification cards. Once refugee status has been granted, the General Directorate for Immigration will be requested to provide appropriate identity papers.

21. The sectoral breakdown for the initial and revised 1994 and proposed 1995 care and maintenance allocations is as follows:

Sector	Initial 1994	Revised 1994	Initial 1995
Food	10,800	24,600	22,900
Transport	219,100	224,400	267,400
Domestic needs	256,900	246,500	341,900
Water	1,300	5,200	5,200
Sanitation	57,000	52,500	46,300
Health	169,300	84,300	98,000
Shelter	4,500	4,500	4,500
Community services	85,100	49,600	47,300
Education	605,700	624,900	581,300
Legal assistance	174,400	212,700	182,700
Agency op. support	359,600	309,200	193,200
Project personnel	122,400	0	0
Total	2,066,100	1,838,400	1,790,700

Voluntary Repatriation

22. During 1995, UNHCR expects that some 250 mainly urban refugees of differing nationalities will repatriate voluntarily. As in 1994, UNHCR will continue to facilitate voluntary repatriation in coordination with the country of origin by arranging transport and travel documentation for beneficiaries, as well as providing a voluntary repatriation grant.

Local Settlement

23. Activities in 1995 are expected to undergo a significant reduction in comparison with 1994, in anticipation of having completed the transfer of responsibility for many of the services within refugee settlements to government institutions. The Multi-Year Plan designed in 1986-1987 resulted in furnishing each of the settlements with basic infrastructure such as dwellings, latrines, clinics, classrooms, roads, water distribution systems and an electrical network. In 1994 the transfer of responsibilities of the last two systems to the relevant national institutions is expected to be completed, leaving 1995 to be devoted to resolving any pending issues. In addition, some of the crops traditionally cultivated will be substituted by others which generate higher benefits, in order to facilitate food self-sufficiency in the settlements.

24. Assistance will be provided to refugee families to share the cost of major repairs to their water and electricity systems that may exceed their financial means. As from the beginning of 1995, the refugees will cover their own water and electricity bills, the participation of the community in these sectors having been formalized in 1994 by the signing of an agreement. Refugees will benefit from the repair of community buildings and the construction of latrines in the settlements.

25. In the health sector, medical attention will continue to be provided while arrangements are being made with the Mexican Institute for Social Welfare (IMSS) to complete the transfer of all services.

26. Given the high number of refugee children born in Mexico, it is expected that educational services will be transferred completely to the Ministry of Education (SEP) by 1996. To this end, UNHCR will continue negotiations in 1995 to ensure that the salaries of teachers and education promoters, covered by UNHCR in 1995, will be transferred to SEP.

27. The credit scheme assisting refugees with agricultural and horticultural production schemes and small business initiatives, especially those presented by women, will continue to be supported, since refugees do not have access to commercial credit in Mexico. Professional services will focus on reforming the current credit fund system in a way that will result in its financial independence from COMAR and UNHCR, as well as benefiting the area within the refugee integration framework.

28. The services of a legal consultant will facilitate the transfer of land and services to the refugees and will provide support to the immigration authorities for the elaboration of FMRs specially developed for refugees.

29. The sectoral breakdown for the initial and revised 1994 and proposed 1995 local settlement allocation is as follows:

Sector	Initial 1994	Revised 1994	Initial 1995
Food	7,700	0	0
Transport	92,300	129,400	123,600
Water	242,100	416,600	16,900
Sanitation	2,300	0	0
Health	27,700	32,800	34,800
Shelter	25,800	104,800	25,800
Education	213,900	500,400	378,300
Crop production	180,000	233,200	287,800
Livestock	47,100	34,800	23,700
Income generation	33,200	6,800	6,800
Legal assistance	0	20,000	3,200
Agency op support	451,700	496,900	198,500
Project personnel	830,800	0	0
Total	2,154,600	1,975,700	1,099,400

Special Programmes

Education Account

30. Scholarship assistance for the academic years 1993/1994 and 1994/1995 will cover 50 and 48 post-secondary students, respectively. Due to financial

limitations no new scholarships are currently planned for 1994/1995, unless additional contributions, can be identified.

Returnee Programme

(a) **Variations in planned activities in 1993**

31. The repatriation of refugees from Chiapas, Campeche and Quintana Roo did not meet original objectives for 1993. Following the events of late May in Guatemala, several mass movements were cancelled and, although individual voluntary repatriations took place during the following months, no collective movement took place until December 1993.

(b) **1994 planned implementation**

32. Two collective voluntary repatriations took place in the first half of 1994 and smaller, individual returns on a regular basis brought the number of returns to 3,653 at the end of June. Movements are expected to accelerate during the latter half of the year as a result of a breakthrough in the peace negotiations, with an estimated 10,000 persons returning by the end of the year. Assistance includes transport, travel documentation and the provision of basic necessities during the transportation phase.

(c) **1995 programme proposals**

33. Implementation of the repatriation programme will continue in 1995, with modifications and adjustments being introduced according to needs and experience gained. As in other years, the programme will be closely coordinated with the UNHCR Office in Guatemala.

34. The collective and organized voluntary return of an estimated 8,000 Guatemalan refugees, as well as individual repatriations from Chiapas, Campeche and Quintana Roo, will continue throughout the year. Basic assistance and logistical support will be provided to returnees during each movement. UNHCR will continue to facilitate visits of designated refugee representatives to Guatemala to allow negotiations for the obtention of land to take place with the Guatemalan authorities. This practice has smoothed the path for collective returns during 1993 and 1994 and is considered an effective means of creating a climate of trust between both parties and of providing information on home conditions to refugees in the camps, facilitating their decision on whether or not to repatriate.

Other Programmes

(a) **Variations in planned activities in 1993**

35. Special refugee training projects were funded, including literacy programmes and basic skills training, in Campeche and Quintana Roo. Special attention was paid to women in order to promote their awareness of and active involvement in the selection of training activities as well as their participation in actual workshops. The success rate was relatively high, even though the implementaion of these projects did not achieve all intended goals.

36. Implementation of the women's project in Chiapas, as well as in training and income-generating activities, was satisfactory. Delays in completing the water system in one camp were serious, with work still unfinished at the end of the year because a private firm had not delivered a promised water pump. Targets set for wage-earning schemes in forestry and maintenance of irrigation systems were not fully met. Delays were experienced in the operation of the credit scheme but, following revision of its statutes in the third quarter of 1993, implementation improved.

(b) **1994 planned implementation**

37. The training of refugees in Campeche and Quintana Roo will continue in 1994. This will help to prepare refugees as well as some Mexican farmers from neighbouring communities to develop new income-generating skills adapted to requirements in Mexico and Guatemala. Training will enhance knowledge in public administration and institutional resources and will prepare for the incorporation of refugee women into all activities related to their self-development.

38. Training and income-generating activities in Chiapas geared towards the promotion of women's awareness and participation in all aspects of their community will expand relative to 1993 levels. The success of these activities will constitute an essential component in finding appropriate durable solutions for those who opt to remain in Mexico, as well as facilitating reintegration of those returning to Guatemala. Income-generating activities are intended to promote self-sufficiency for the refugee population through support for small-scale rural development activities crop production, livestock, fisheries, reafforestation projects which also promote environmental sustainability and credit for small business enterprises.

39. Training is also provided to assist refugees in developing the skills required for these activities. Health and nutrition training activities cover refugees residing in 79 camps in Chiapas and include training for refugee health promoters and midwives; technical health aspects and awareness training focusing on women are stressed.

(c) **1995 programme proposals**

40. Training projects in Campeche and Quintana Roo will continue to benefit both refugees returning to Guatemala during this period and those remaining in Mexico. The projects will include training in premise maintenance, a literacy and vocational skills programme particularly addressed to young refugees, training in the promotion of health and dental care, and workshops on human rights, accounting, credit management and reproductive health for women, as well as awareness seminars on quick impact projects (QIPs) implemented in areas of return in Guatemala.

41. Training, income-generating and health activities in Chiapas in 1995 will depend on future funding commitments. As a next step to training, the project will promote income-generation through small enterprises managed by the refugees themselves, based on feasibility studies carried out by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), UNDP and other organizations with relevant expertise. Awareness and gender focus training will include mixed groups as a

means to ensure women's participation in all aspects of community life; six new day care centres will be established in strategic areas where women are able to participate in productive and income-generating activities. Health and nutrition activities with a special focus on women's health and awareness will continue in an effort to ensure the provision of primary care to the refugee population. Training in rural development activities benefiting both refugees and the Mexican population will be implemented in close cooperation with Mexican governmental institutions, using UNHCR funds to complement government funds.

Programme Delivery and Administrative Support Costs

(a) **Variations in planned activities in 1993**

42. Expenditures in Mexico in 1993 were somewhat lower than revised 1993 estimates, largely due to delays in the implementation of the Guatemalan repatriation programme.

43. A Field Officer post (Women and Children) was created in late 1993 in Chiapas to coordinate training activities. In October 1993, the Field Office in Chetumal was reinforced by a Junior Professional Officer functioning as Assistant Field Officer.

(b) **1994 planned implementation**

44. Revised estimates for 1994 are higher than the initial estimates. Posts created in the course of 1993 are budgeted for the full year in 1994, and all categories of expenditure have been increased to cover costs related to the stepped-up repatriation programme of Guatemalan refugees. Budgetary provision has been made for the replacement of several vehicles during the year.

(c) **1995 initial estimates**

45. Initial estimates of programme delivery and administrative support costs for 1995 are slightly lower than the revised 1994 estimates primarily due to the fact that capital expenditure requirements are expected to be significantly lower in 1995.

UNHCR EXPENDITURE IN MEXICO

(in thousands of United States dollars)

1993	1994		1995	
AMOUNT OBLIGATED	ALLOCATION APPROVED BY 1993 EXCOM	PROPOSED REVISED ALLOCATION	SOURCE OF FUNDS AND TYPE OF ASSISTANCE	PROPOSED ALLOCATION/ PROJECTION
GENERAL PROGRAMMES (1)				
2,405.8	2,066.1	1,838.4	CARE AND MAINTENANCE	1,790.7
150.1	275.0	247.1	VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION	121.8
2,878.7 a/	2,154.6	1,975.7	LOCAL SETTLEMENT	1,099.4
0.5 b/	–	–	RESETTLEMENT	–
–	–	2,114.4	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Annexes I a and II a	1,960.6
5,435.1	**4,495.7**	**6,175.6**	**SUB–TOTAL OPERATIONS**	**4,972.5**
1,165.9	1,249.0	362.3	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT See Annexes I b and II b	333.5
6,601.0	**5,744.7**	**6,537.9**	**T O T A L (1)**	**5,306.0**
SPECIAL PROGRAMMES (2)				
76.8	38.2	38.2	EDUCATION ACCOUNT 48 university scholarships	46.2
4,415.4	2,369.4	2,686.9	OTHER TRUST FUNDS REPATRIATION/RETURNEE PROGRAMME	2,791.9
–	3,419.0	3,065.4	CIREFCA/PRODERE	2,604.1
–	–	276.2	PROGRAMME DELIVERY See Annexes I a and II a	276.2
355.7	154.0	445.1	ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT Junior Professional Officer	273.1
4,847.9	**5,980.6**	**6,511.8**	**T O T A L (2)**	**5,991.5**
11,448.9	**11,725.3**	**13,049.7**	**GRAND TOTAL (1+2)**	**11,297.5**

a/ of which US$ 15,754 incurred against Overall Allocation
b/ obligation incurred against Overall Allocation